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ABSTRACT

Addressed to those who are involved in the education of adults, this paper reviews hypotheses of patterns in adult development, and discusses possible roles of educators and educational programs in facilitating growth throughout adult life. The following topics are included: Time and the Life Cycle, Socialization and Roles, Stages of Adult Development, Recent Studies of Adult Development, Adult Development and Learning, One Woman's Development: An Example, Learning as Socialization, and Learning as Personal Growth. A list of references is given. (WL)

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A New Look At Lifelong Learning

by William A. Charland, Jr.

William A. Charland, Jr. has been Director of The University Without Walls at Chicago State University, a member of the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, since its inception in 1971. Prior to his present appointment, Mr. Charland was designated Assistant Professor of Religion and Chaplain of Lake Forest College upon receiving a doctorate of religion from Chicago Theological Seminary. He previously served as Instructor of Religion and Philosophy, Director of the Honors Program, and Associate Director of the Institute for Desegregated Schools under the aegis of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Teaching Internship Program, and also was a Co-Founder and President of the Chicago Urban Corps.

Introduction

"Lifelong Learning" has become a major issue in American education as secondary schools, colleges, and universities serve a dramatically increasing number of adults beyond the age of their traditional clientele.[1] The following paper is addressed to those who are involved in the education of adults. It reviews hypotheses of patterns in adult development, and discusses possible roles of educators and educational programs in facilitating growth throughout adult life.

Time and The Life Cycle

Our capacity for understanding the human life cycle begins with our conception of time. Generally, we think only of its linear dimension—how long a segment of time lasts. In ancient Greece this conception of time was called *chronos* (as in "chronology"). In addition there was another conception of time, *kairos:* seasonal or opportune time, the "right moment." The dimension of linear *chronos* time is measured by its duration; the dimension of *kairos* time is measured by its depth of possibilities.

Neugarten and Datan[2] identify three dimensions of time: life time, social time, and historical time. The first refers to the sequence of stages (infancy, childhood, adolescence, maturity, and old age) which flow from biological development. Social time pertains to the age-status expectations of society, which vary considerably in different cultures. For example, in some societies a 14-year old female would normally function as a mother, while in middle class American she would only be exploring dating relationships with males. Historical time refers to the personal significance of critical events (such as war) or processes (such as urbanization or industrialization) affecting one's culture. It is closely related to cohort effect, the development of similar attributes due to sharing a common set of experiences. Examples would include lasting thrift characteristics among young adults of the depression or increased experimentation in sexual relationships among young adults with the advent of oral contraceptives.

Socialization and Roles

A second consideration in understanding the life cycle has to do with socialization and social roles. Socialization is "the process by which the human infant is transformed into a member of a particular society and learns the roles appropriate to his or her sex, social class, and ethnic group."[3] A social role is a relatively coherent system of behaviors which is sanctioned by society. "The individual learns to think and to behave in ways that are consonant with the roles he plays, so that performance in a succession of roles leads to predictable personality configurations."[4]

Socialization is a powerful coercive process. It rests upon a history of rewarding/punishing relationships with significant other persons through which the developing child learns to define himself and evaluate his behavior in terms of their expectations. By the time one reaches adulthood, this history of interaction is highly generalized, but we each have a "reference set" of persons and groups to whom we refer our present behavior.[5] In complex, stratified societies, social roles may be organized in "career line" sequences which tend to lead persons

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along particular tracks.[6] To the degree that a society remains relatively static and coherent, its capacity to shape persons to fit individual or sequential roles remains strong.

Any discontinuity weakens this capacity, and the force and forms of traditional socialization may be eviscerated. Individuals who are accustomed to respond to extrinsic guides for identity and behavior may find themselves at a loss. Others may survive only by forging new models and norms through their own experience. It is out of just such circumstances in contemporary American society that a third, important perspective on the life cycle has begun to emerge within the social sciences: the systematic study of adult development.

Stages of Adult Development: Past Studies

Although stages of development have long been posited and scrutinized in children and adolescents, levels of adult development traditionally have not been accorded the same attention. The origins of this work can be found in Erik Erikson's studies of developmental tasks in the 1930's.[7] He conceived of human growth as "epigenesis," the sequential unfolding of human potentialities. On the assumption that epigenesis is a lifelong process, Erikson conceived of valued qualities such as generativity and ego integrity which might emerge only in adult life.

In the late 1940's Robert Havighurst distinguished three periods in adulthood: early adulthood, middle age, and later maturity.[8] The first particularly with reference to schooling, was seen as a challenging period of "transition from an age-graded to a social status-graded ladder." This transition required considerable individualism and coping with loneliness outside a family support system as well as the ambiguity of changing societal expectations.

Middle age (circa. 30-35) was a time of peak influence on and high demands from society. It was a period full of vocational, family, and civic activity in which time seemed to pass quickly. Later maturity entailed more experiences of loss, a more defensive stance toward life, and a decline in the significance of personal achievment.[9]

The most striking drawback to these studies is their exclusion of persons outside the middle class. Havighurst investigated only the 40%-50% of Americans whose family occupations were skilled, professional, or managerial jobs; these people shared an ideology of thrift, self-improvement, and future-orientation. Although he was aware of the cultural relativity of his work, this middle class is taken to represent the spectrum of American society by default. Preoccupations with status and achievement are applied to the whole as if minorities and other excluded sub-groups reacted identically. He observes in earnest, "probably every middle class man remembers clearly the first time he did a full day's work. From that day he felt himself to be a man."[10] And, he describes the challenge of transition from an age-graded to a social-status graded ladder without considering what the "ladder" per se means to excluded minorities.

Recent studies of adult development reflect a more differentiated view of society, and seem to indicate that social roles and systems of stratification in mid-century American have changed strikingly. Orville Brim, for example, examines the effects of social change on individuals and stresses the need for American society "to provide for effective socialization of its members *without being dependent on societal stability* (emphasis added)."[11]

Recent Studies of Adult Development

Arthur Chickering, Roger Gould, and Daniel Levinson[12] reflect a similar orientation to constant social change. They address many of the same issues which Erikson and others have related to the concept of ego identity. Chickering sums up their orientation:

...in 20th century American society, in contrast to earlier times and more homogeneous cultures, identity is no longer simply 'given'...Now, conflicting values, diverse behaviors, and mutually exclusive models combine to offer multiple alternatives from which a particular identity must be constructed, and then reconstructed again *in the light of new opportunities or new frustrations... (emphasis added)*[13]

Gould adds,

the prevailing concepts of adulthood have obscured... the fact that an adult needs to engage in any kind of continuing growth process at all. Like a butterfly, an adult is supposed to emerge fully formed and on cue, after a succession of developmental stages in childhood.[14]

Without discounting the importance of social roles, Gould finds no inherent conflict between role requirements and the growth needs of individuals. *Each role in life can lead to two opposite results in the change process. A role can be an opportunity to come to a more comprehensive understanding of oneself in action or a role can become a simplified definition of the self that does not do justice to the whole complex human being.*

His fundamental concern is that individual growth be acknowledged as a legitimate and essential quality of adulthood.

Throughout the years of adulthood, there is an ever-increasing need to win permission from oneself to continue developing...toward becoming more tolerant of oneself, and more appreciative of the complexity of both the surrounding world and of the mental milieu...[15]

Two of Gould's studies of psychiatric outpatients and others[16] identify dominant concerns of adults at various stages of life similar to Havighurst's schema. His themes are well documented and drawn from a large body of material in group psychotherapy sessions, but he does not explore the dynamics of change from one life phase and its concerns to another.

Levinson, in a study of adult development in 40 men from varied social classes and occupational groups, does explore the dynamics of change. He identifies the "developmental transition" ("a turning point or boundary between two periods of greater stability") as an important, recurrent phenomenon in life. He hypothesizes six stages in the life cycle to the point of middle adulthood: leaving the family (about age 20), getting into the adult world (the 20's), settling down (early 30's), becoming one's own man (mid to late 30's), mid-life transition (early 40's) and restabilization (mid 40's). These stages relate to the difficult task of maintaining a personally and societally viable "life structure."[17]

Getting into the adult world involves living through a series of tentative personal commitments in an atmosphere of precarious exploration, often motivated by a guiding dream of one's ultimate destiny as a human being. Levinson's description of this period recalls Martin Buber's interpretation of history as alternating epochs of homelessness and habitation.[18]

It is the need for habitation which motivates transition to the phase Settling Down, a period when high energy is invested in achievement within a closely defined set of social roles. The aim of "settling down" is success, and the spirit of this stage is reminiscent of Havighurst's account of American middle age twenty-five years ago. "For the middle-class man," he wrote, "success in an occupation is essential to the holding his middle-class social position. He will usually subordinate all other tasks of life to this one..."[19]

The process of selecting and subordinating among one's potentialities is ultimately self-negating, and settling down gives way to two subsequent periods of transition on the way to an assumed, eventual mellowing. It is in his analysis of the transition following settling down that Levinson's work stands out among other writers on adulthood. Like Gould, he sees the importance of regarding growth in adulthood as permissable. He believes that most theories of pre-adult development support an illusion that "normal" adulthood involves living out a somewhat static life pattern of indefinite duration. But in settling-down one is bound to close off options which later are felt to be important to authentic selfhood. So, in the later phase becoming one's own man it is common to experience the feeling that one has lost or betrayed important elements of a guiding dream. Settling-down also encourages an illusion of autonomy; one feels in charge of oneself and motivated by inner needs and aspirations. Levinson maintains, however, that we are never as independent as we feel while settling-down: "we seek to a large extent what the institutions and reference groups important to us are helping us define. We may be more free of our parents, but we find or invent others who guide us, protect us, tell us what to do."[20]

In understanding adult development, it is realistic to keep open both the perspectives of social conditioning and of emerging, lifelong change together with the contrasting tones of determinism and freedom which they suggest. Then adulthood can be seen in something like its actual complexity: not only as a process of living out the social roles to which one has been socialized, but also as a time to encounter the intricacies of those roles within one's own experience. Adulthood is a time when one may explore and re-examine one's experience and possibly re-form important features of one's identity, face to face with societal expectations.

Adult Development And Learning

Both facets of adulthood—socialization, and growth in personal identify—are of great importance to adult education. Whether motivated by extrinsic expectations (socialization) or by an intrinsic desire for change, Havighurst's statement seems true: "the human individual learns his way through life."[21]

One Woman's Development: An Example

Consider the following case of an adult learning her way through an important transition.

Kay Sawyer is a 35 year old woman, mother of two young boys, and the wife of a college English professor, and has a masters degree in English literature. Eight years ago, both joined the faculty of a small liberal arts college in the rural Midwest. At the time of their appointments their professional lives seemed secure. Art taught full time and Kay part time while caring for the boys. Gradually, the Sawyers decided to look for a stimulating place to spend a sabbatical year, and took leaves of absence in order to relocate in Buenos Aires. They found their new environment challenging and refreshing, and extended their stay to three years.

When they returned the academic "market" had changed, and there was an overabundance of highly qualified academicians while at the same time enrollment had declined. Kay was denied reappointment.

Now the boys were spending full days in school and Kay found a great deal of time on her hands. She could not find an opening in neighboring colleges, and was "overqualified" to teach high school. Finally, Kay stopped looking for work in her field and settled into the roles of wife and mother. Two years after returning from Argentina, a friend at the College phoned Kay one evening. He was experimenting with a new approach to teaching theories of counseling, had introduced his students to three distinctive approaches, and now wanted to interject an experiential component in the class. He identified three individuals who he thought would be relatively unknown to the students and yet willing to share themselves to an extent with the class. He asked each of them to participate as genuinely as they chose to in the role of counselee with a student who would take the part of a counselor in a particular

counseling style. Their interaction in counseling would take place in front of the class.

Kay thought about Ron's proposal and then agreed to the experiment. As it happened, Kay's student "counselor" had chosen to study logotherapy, an approach to counseling which emphasizes the human need for meaning. In the course of her interview, Kay was asked to describe the sources of meaning in her life. She was surprised to find herself crying and then saying a great deal about how meaningless she felt.

After class, Kay asked to talk further with Ron about the feelings she had just experienced. Outside his office, she noticed an announcement of a social case work position in Union County. She had considered entering a "human service" vocation such as social work or the ministry while in college. Now she commented, "I wonder if I could do that?" "I don't see why not," Ron responded, and they talked about the possibility of her applying. Kay decided to apply, and got the job.

Now, six months later, Kay is engaged in a stimulating new career. She finds herself involved with people and their problems at a depth she never thought possible. There is a new intensity in her life. But there are new problems as well. Sometimes it is hard to define her function and manage her feelings with clients. She finds herself overstimulated at times, or emotionally drained. Other problems have appeared at home. Kay and Art find that they no longer share the intellectual and professional interests in which their marriage was founded and they are beginning to question the future of their relationship. Kay senses an urgent need for new learning.

Kay Sawyer's case contains features common to all adult learning. Adult learning is situational learning in the context of role performance.[22] Adults are not preparing for the future as traditional educational systems assume; they tend to approach learning through the demands of daily life. For them the future is *now*. Most need to learn how to solve problems, resolve conflicts, expand capacities, question assumptions, and perhaps mediate commitments having to do with roles which they already occupy.

For some adults, such as Kay, conflicts in time are paramount and can stimulate personal growth. The historical time of the academic marketplace, the prime of her biological time, and the demands of social time converge for her in *kairos;* she has arrived at a teachable moment. Kay also serves to illustrate adult learning in a context of personal growth.

Learning as Socialization

It is important to distinguish between personal growth and socialization as motive forces in adult learning. Although the capacity for personal development may be present, most adults customarily behave on the basis of prior socialization, showing little inclination to rework their identities. In an unpublished paper,[23] Chickering cites studies of ego development, character formation, and moral reasoning which have shown consistently that the majority of subjects habitually respond to the perceived expectations of others. It is only among those individuals whose socialization was unsuccessful or those who have developed sufficient autonomy to transcend social conformity that we find adults for whom the definition of individual, adult identity is likely to appear as an important issue. (In no study has either group exceeded 25% of the total population.) Chickering therefore encourages adult educators to respond to the needs of adults at all levels rather than "simply pitch the educational program at the highest development stages."[24]

Chickering's point is well taken. As adult educators we must be sensitive to the needs and expectations of applicants who seek to build learning upon their previous socialization. Persons whose entire academic experience has been organized for them, or whose personal survival has required social conformity, cannot be expected to easily begin self direction. When many of the structures of traditional schooling are replaced by more autonomous methods such as cooperatively-developed learning contracts, the adjustment required can be overwhelming.

Adults who study to be socialized but who lack access to traditional higher education can pose a dilemma to the admissions committees of non-traditional programs. One option is to accept only those applicants who appear to personify the stated goals of open education: creativity, personal autonomy, inherent interest in individualized learning objectives, *etc.* That alternative ignores the impact of prior academic socialization upon persons whose potential for self-directed study may not be immediately apparent. It also begs the value-added question of whether a program is helping develop life long learners, rather than simply identifying and enrolling them.

On the other hand, of course, it is not possible to facilitate self-initiated learning with persons who completely lack intellectual self-direction or motivation. A middle range alternative is to offer opportunities for exploring and practicing some features of self-initiated learning (such as life planning and goal analysis) to applicants and students. Although it is easy to overestimate the lasting effects of such short term experiences, workshops in "learning to learn" could become a vital part of many non-traditional programs. In the context of Brim's analysis, they could help meet the continuing need to resocialize convention-oriented persons who are attempting to cope with a changing society, by strengthening their autonomy. Another option to develop an entire alternative program for adults, such as the Board of Governor's Degree program in Illinois, which releases adults from unrealistic constraints such as fulltime classroom attendance while at the same time providing something on the order of a pre-given, traditional curriculum. This frees

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open-learning programs to work with their essential task of facilitating personal growth.

Learning as Personal Growth

Learning for personal growth, as in the case of Kay, can be understood as a dipolar process of *venturing* and *centering*.

Soren Kierkegaard described the process of venturing vividly in relation to selfhood:

"so it is too that in the eyes of the world it is dangerous to venture. And why? Because one may lose...And yet, by not venturing, it is so dreadfully easy to lose that which it would be difficult to lose in even the most venturesome venture, and in any case never so easily, so completely as if it were nothing...one's self. For if I have ventured amiss–very well, then life helps me by its punishment. But if I have not ventured at all–who then helps me? And, moreover, if by not venturing at all in the highest sense (and to venture in the highest sense is precisely to become conscious of oneself) I have gained all earthly advantages...and lose myself! What of that?"[25]

Chickering, in *Education and Identity*, offers a more subdued description of venturing as a desired characteristic in the learner: to be "open to experience, willing to confront questions and problems, to discover new possibilties, to disagree, and to initiate things for himself."[26]

Ultimately in venturing there is a waning of energies and interests and the growing person begins to regroup. He attempts to integrate his newly acquired experiences, behaviors, and ideas within the total context of his life as a person, a process of *centering*. Under optimal conditions, venturing and centering alternate in a mutually reinforcing rhythm, which is sustained throughout life. As new challenges and opportunities are encountered in the "developmental transitions" of life time and social time or in the movements and events of historical time, the growing person alternates ventures into the unknown with periods of centering to sort things out and secure a new and deeper base of identity.

In practice, of course, our venturing and centering—our attempts at growth—may be badly synchronized; we need support to keep the two in balance. Methods have been devised for structuring such support for young adults in college, such as alternating residential and off-campus terms in "cooperative education." Today we are on the verge of establishing comparable strategies to support growth of older adults. Contract learning is one such method: in the process of transposing overarching personal goals into measurable and achievable objectives, the anxiety which accompanies new ventures can be brought within manageable limits.

Another resource for adult learning is Havighurst's concept of the development task, uniting readiness to learn and societal expectations as a basis for developing curricula[27] Havighurst proposed a simple and functional method for analyzing a developmental task: define it as precisely as possible; explore its main biological, psychological, and cultural components through relevant academic disciplines; and assess implications of the task for education.[28] As an analytic tool, developmental task analysis is even more useful for individuals than in collective classroom settings; one can make plans *with* individuals rather than *for* them more readily than one can with groups. To the extent an educator can understand and respond positively to the development task of a learner, he can help maximize the value of that person's "teachable moments."

Finally, perhaps the most critical resource in adult learning is the role of the educator himself. That role ultimately can be understood only in the context of a total life style. Buber's description of the educator contrasted with the propagandist offers an intriguing, even if somewhat idealistic, personal/professional model:

"The educator whom I have in mind lives in a world of individuals, a certain number of whom are always at any one time committed to his care. He sees each of these individuals as in a position to become a unique, single person, and thus the bearer of a special task of existence which can be fulfilled through him and through him alone. He sees every personal life as engaged in such a process of actualization, and he knows from his own experience that the forces making for actualization are all the time involved in a microcosmic struggle with counterforces. He has come to see himself as a helper of the actualizing forces. He knows these forces; they have shaped and they still shape him. Now he puts this person shaped by them at their disposal for a new struggle and a new work. He cannot wish to impose himself, for he believes in the effect of the actualizing forces, that is, he believes that in every man what is right is established in a single and uniquely personal way. No other way may be imposed on a man, but another way, that of the educator, may and must unfold what is right, as in this case it struggles for achievement, and help it to develop.

The propagandist, who imposes himself, does not really believe even in his own cause, for he does not trust it to attain its effect of its own power without his special methods, whose symbols are the loudspeaker and the television advertisement. The educator who unfolds what is there believes in the primal power which has scattered itself, and still scatters itself, in all human beings in order that it may grow up in each man in the special form of that man. He is confident that this growth needs at each moment only that help which is given in meeting, and that he is called to supply that help.[29]

It is not easy to adopt and maintain that posture; most of us have difficulty really meeting others and so we are prone to impose ourselves on them. Neither is it easy for educators nor anyone else to trust the evolution of a natural process. What matters is that we try—cultivating our capacity to appreciate the humanity we share with our students and our

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ability to meet them on that basis. "It is not the educational intention but it is the meeting which is fruitful."[30]

Educators today have an unusual opportunity to attempt to help adults who wish to grow through learning. By learning themselves that changing and growing are legitimate aspects of being adult, by understanding some of the typical transitions of adulthood, and by exploring new modes of fostering growth, more educators may find new personal enrichment as they come in touch with a venturing/centering rhythm one can learn to follow throughout life.

Notes

[1]A recent study by Educational Testing service reports:
Among students enrolled in undergraduate programs, the number 22 and older has been rising slowly but steadily in recent years. From 1960 to 1970, the number of men students 22 to 34 doubled, and the number of women students in that group tripled. In 1970, roughly one-third of all undergraduates were 22 or older. One sixth were over 25.

The same study cites data which suggest that a substantial population of adult learners are interested in continuing education but in something other than a traditional academic setting: "...only one-sixth of the people who express interest in further education look to universities and colleges for it." Roelfs, 1975, p. 5.

[2]Neugarten and Datan 1963

[3]Neugarten/Datan 1963 p. 56.

[4]Ibid p. 55.

[5]Brim 1966 P. 16.

[6]Friedman 1964, p. 42.

[7]Erikson 1930's citations

[8]Havighurst's schema of life stages is similar to those of a number of other adult personality theorists, all of whom identify periods of young adult engagement, mid-life involvement, and later life disengagement from the issues and institutions on one's time."

[9]Havighurst 1948 and 1953

[10]Havighurst 1948 p. 46

[11]Brim, p. 20.

[12]Chickering, Gould, Levinson

[13]Chickering Education and Identity, p. 92.

[14]Gould 1969 p. 74.
The same point in essence was made by Erikson in a 1963 footnote to his essay "Eight Ages of Man" in *Childhood and Society*. Erikson objected to the tendency of other writers to make an "achievement scale" out of the table of epigenetic stages which he had published thirteen years before. Erikson interpreted this inclination to ignore, for example, Basic Mistrust as an inevitable concomitant of Basic Trust as an expression of the "success ideology" of modern industrial society. He emphasized that growth in life is an inherently unfinished task: not necessarily on account of social change but because of the factors of stress inherent in life.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Gould AJP, 1972.

[17]Levinson, p. 247.

[18]Buber, Between Man and Men, 1971, p. 126.

[19]Havighurst, 1948, p. 78.

[20]Levinson, p. 250.

[21]Havighurst, 1948, p. 1.

[22]Eugene Friedman, 1964, p. 44.

[23]Chickering, 1974, unpublished.

[24]Ibid, p. 23.

[25]The Sickness Unto Death, quoted by May, 1950, p. 33.

[26]Chickering, 1969, p. 55.

[27]Havighurst, 1948, p. 2.

[28]Ibid, p. 4.

[29]Buber, Knowledge of Man, p. 83.

[30]Buber, 1971, p. 107.

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